

# **PALAU 2013 INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM REPORT**

## **Executive Summary**

The constitution and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government generally respected religious freedom.

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice.

U.S. embassy officials discussed religious freedom with the government and maintained regular contacts with religious groups.

## **Section I. Religious Demography**

The U.S. government estimates the total population at 21,000 (July 2013 estimate). Approximately 65 percent is Roman Catholic. Estimates of other religious groups include the Evangelical Church with approximately 10 percent, Seventh-day Adventists 5 percent, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) more than 1 percent, and Jehovah's Witnesses less than 1 percent. Modekngai, which embraces both animist and Christian beliefs and is unique to the country, is approximately 9 percent of the population. Within the foreign community of more than 4,000 people, the majority is Filipino Catholic. There is also a small group of Bangladeshi Muslims.

## **Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom**

### **Legal/Policy Framework**

The constitution and other laws and policies generally protect religious freedom.

The government requires religious groups to obtain charters as nonprofit organizations from the Office of the Attorney General. As nonprofit organizations, religious groups and mission agencies are exempt from paying taxes. Foreign missionaries are required to obtain missionary permits at the Office of Immigration.

The government does not permit religious instruction in public schools. Representatives of any religious group may request government financial support for religious schools.

## PALAU

### **Government Practices**

Although the government did not sponsor religious groups or promote religious activities, prayers were offered at government-sponsored ceremonies and events.

### **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Religious schools affiliated with Catholics, Seventh day Adventists, and the Evangelical Church operated freely.

### **Section IV. U.S. Government Policy**

U.S. embassy officials discussed religious freedom with the government and maintained regular contact with various religious groups, including by inviting representatives of religious groups to embassy-sponsored events. Discussions with government officials included the death of a Muslim baby born to Uighur parents. Following these conversations, the government helped to facilitate the baby's burial according to Islamic practices.